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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001826

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR PRM AND NEA  
GENEVA FOR RMA

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TAGS: [KPAL](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [IS](#) [JO](#) [ICRC](#)

SUBJECT: MDA ISSUE: EMBLEM WORKING GROUP'S NEXT STEPS

REF: A. STATE 34521 (NOTAL)

[B](#). SANTOS-GREENE EMAIL 2/25/05

[C](#). AMMAN 1199

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Based on recent consultations with regional members of the Emblem Working Group, the Chair of the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement's Standing Commission is confident the majority of Arab National Societies can be persuaded to actively support the reconvening of the aborted October 2000 conference that would have resolved the issue of Israeli membership by adopting an additional Third Protocol to the Geneva Convention. Dr. Al Hadid intends to ask Arab Societies to start lobbying their respective governments at an Arab Red Crescent Society Meeting in Riyadh March 20-21. Dismissing Palestinian support as "important but not a must," Al Hadid argued that visible Swiss support would be key to any regional diplomatic approaches. He urged the USG to join him in lobbying the Swiss FM to appoint a high-level official to signal international support for the conference, and also suggested specific steps the USG could take vis-a-vis the Egyptians and Israelis in a March 5 meeting. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) As instructed ref A, Amman-based refcood called on Dr. Mohammed Al Hadid, President of the Jordanian Red Crescent Society and the current Chair of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement's Standing Commission (SC), March 5 to ask for his assessment of potential regional opposition to the idea of reconvening the aborted 2000 conference that would have paved the way for Israeli National Society membership by establishing a third emblem. Al Hadid confirmed that he broached the idea of using the upcoming March 21-21 Arab Red Crescent Assembly meeting in Riyadh to advance the notion of the conference during his talks with SC Emblem Working Group Chair Ambassador Philippe Cuvellier and Egyptian Red Crescent SecGen Dr. Mamdouh Gabr in Amman February 21. Al Hadid said he also used the margins of a recently-concluded International Humanitarian Law Conference in Cairo to sound out Syrian RC President Abdul Rahman Attar, when Attar failed to join their meeting in Amman.

#### POTENTIAL OPPOSITION

[1](#)3. (C) Al Hadid said that he was confident, following those meetings, that he could successfully press Arab National Societies to start lobbying their respective governments for the conference. Al Hadid explained that the critical countries to bring on board, in his view, are those "surrounding Israel." The one wildcard -- Syria -- now appeared containable because Attar had told him in Cairo that he believed the SAR would not/not oppose the conference. According to Al Hadid, Attar believed the SAR would view opposition as "a waste of time with no political gains." Although Al Hadid acknowledged that the Syrian National Society "cannot move on an issue without informing its Government" he trusted Attar's preliminary judgment. Asked about potential opponents in the larger region, Al Hadid said that the key countries to target would be Lebanon, because of its proximity to Israel, and Iran. He explained that he had revised his earlier assessment that Iran would not be an opponent (ref C) after meeting the Iranian National Society President in Amman March 4 at a training seminar on natural disasters. Al Hadid noted that Iran's position was "clearly no where near as tough as it had been in the 1990s," but cautioned that the Iranians might be inclined to politicize the issue simply to oppose the U.S. Contrary to some third-hand accounts, Al Hadid said that he did not/not think we needed to focus on Sudan.

[1](#)4. (C) Asked about Palestinian influence, Al Hadid acknowledged that Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) President Younis Al Khatib had become more critical of the MDA in recent years because of the PRCS's opposition to MDA operating in the West Bank. While he acknowledged that the Palestinians would have political influence in the region, Al Hadid argued that their support is "not a must." He added that MDA-PRCS outreach would be helpful if it was conducted in a manner that did not appear to the Palestinians as if they were being "bribed." Al Hadid noted that the Jordanian

Red Crescent was in the process of seeking EU funds to support an MDA training program, and might be well positioned to offer trilateral Jordanian Red Crescent-MDA-PRCS training opportunities, provided if it could secure external funding. Al Hadid added that he was "more hopeful" that the incoming MDA Chair would focus on strengthening MDA's relations with regional societies, noting that Avi Zohar had turned down several opportunities to visit Jordan during his tenure.

#### AL HADID'S REGIONAL STRATEGY -----

15. (C) Turing to his regional strategy, Al Hadid explained that his next step would be to raise the conference issue at the Arab Assembly Executive Committee meeting March 20 in Riyadh. Because prior commitments will make it impossible for him to remain in Riyadh to address the full Assembly March 21-22, he planned to ask Dr. Gabr to convey a two part message on his behalf: 1) The SC Chair believes the time is right to reconvene the 2000 conference and 2) that he was counting on Arab National Societies to lobby their governments, especially government officials appointed since 2000. Al Hadid predicted that there would be "little opposition" in Riyadh as the issue was ultimately a decision for governments. Continuing, he intimated that lining up Swiss support would be key to securing the support of Arab governments. He argued that it was critical, in his view, to convince the Swiss to appoint a Commissioner or Ambassador-at-Large responsible for the conference, as they had done in 2000, as this would pave the way for any diplomatic overtures by sending a clear signal of the level of international support. Al Hadid said that Ambassador Cuvellier would be seeking a meeting with the Swiss FM in the coming month, and that he would also attempt to raise the issue with the Swiss MFA during his March 7-13 visit to Switzerland.

#### AL HADID ON US INFLUENCE -----

16. (C) Al Hadid thought the USG should also start making diplomatic overtures in the region. He strongly suggested approaching Egypt first, given its standing in the region on the Arab-Israeli issue. Al Hadid argued that FM Aboul Ghaith would be a more effective ally than the Egyptian Government spokesman identified by Ambassador Cuvellier in Ref. B to generate regional support, but recommended that the American RC ask the Egyptian RC to lay the groundwork with the FM first in case the issue is unfamiliar. With regard to other bilateral USG approaches, Al Hadid noted that it is important to argue that the third emblem would assist countries other than Israel, such as Eritrea. He also appealed to the USG to join him in underscoring the importance of statute compliance with the Israelis. Commenting that "we have to get Israel to pull its act together," Al Hadid said meetings he has had with visiting MDA officials over the last month have left him increasingly concerned that they do not fully realize that adoption of the third protocol alone will not guarantee membership.

HALE